

Elegiac Sonnet

Inscribed to the Memory of M. M. Hays, Esq.

[*Moses Michael Hays, a brother-in-law of Isaac Touro, hazan of Congregation Yeshuat Israel of Newport, R. I., was born in 1739, probably in New York. He lived for a time in Newport, and after the Revolution settled in Boston. He was one of the few Jews who became a well-known resident of that eighteenth-century New England city. There he attained distinction as a merchant and a Mason. He died in 1805. The socially prominent Hays attracted the attention of the flamboyant Robert Treat Paine, a gifted poet, whose intellectual arrogance created much excitement in the Boston of that era.*

The sonnet reprinted herewith was written by Paine and included in his Works in Verse and Prose, published in 1812. The year in which this poem was written was a critical one for the poet. Two of his children had died in 1804, and he himself was extremely ill in 1805. The sentiments expressed in these verses reflect both his own sorrows and his esteem for Hays. Paine died in 1811, at the age of thirty-eight. — EDITOR.]

Here sleepest thou, Man of Soul! Thy spirit flown,
How dark and tenantless its desert clay!
Cold is that heart, which throbb'd at sorrow's moan.
Untuned that tongue, which charmed the social day.

Where now the Wit, by generous roughness graced?
Or Friendship's accent, kindling as it fell?
Or Bounty's stealing foot, whose step untraced
Had watched pale Want, and stored her famished cell?

Alas, 'tis all thou art! whose vigorous mind
Inspiring force to Truth and Feeling gave,
Whose rich resources equal power combined,
The gay to brighten, and instruct the grave!

Farewell, Adieu! Sweet Peace thy vigils keep;
For Pilgrim Virtue sojourns here to weep!